



Mental Health Task Force
Communities That Care

NEWS RELEASE

(ST. JOHN'S, NL - May 19, 2022) The municipal *Mental Health Task Force: Communities that Care* announced a new partnership today that will see Mayors, Deputy Mayors, Councillors and Municipal Administrators across Newfoundland and Labrador gain access to important mental health and wellness resources. The announcement was made by Tina Neary, Chair of the Task Force and Councillor with the Town of Portugal Cove-St. Philip's, along with Deputy Mayor Madonna Stewart-Sharpe. The Town leads the task force on behalf of all cities and towns in the province.

"Mental health issues continue to affect individuals throughout the province in communities large and small," said Neary. "The municipal Mental Health Task Force is delighted to form a new partnership with hypnotist and wellness expert Gary Summers that will see professionals from across the country educate the municipal sector here in Newfoundland and Labrador and provide our colleagues a wide range of information on topics ranging from reliving stress to conflict resolution."

There are many wonderful organizations supporting mental health and wellness, but municipal officials and residents continue to struggle and need more support. Today's announcement better positions the task force to support the municipal sector and have a greater impact at the community level.

"The wealth of knowledge and expertise Gary brings to the table, along with his access to other professionals in the field, will greatly support our sector, and will empower my colleagues to support residents who reach out for help," added Neary. "This is exactly what the task force was created to do, and we are delighted to see this important work commence."

The new partnership, which was launched to the municipal sector in Gander in early May, includes three components. The first is the sharing of resources (audio and video recordings, toolkits, presentations, etc.), all produced or coordinated by Gary Summers. This includes over 90 interviews with mental health, wellness and other experts and professionals that originally aired on his former radio show on VOXM. The second component is an annual municipally focused mental health summit. The inaugural summit took place in early May,

and another is scheduled for 2023. The third and final component is the delivery of a monthly webinar for the municipal sector. They will begin next month.

“I am excited to be part of what I anticipate will be the most significant mental health and wellness initiative in terms of scope and reach ever developed in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador,” said Summers. “Helping people has been near and dear to my heart for over 30 years and I am delighted to now collaborate with community leaders and the Mental Health Task Force to provide their colleagues, municipal staff, and all residents of the province access to hundreds of digital and print resources online. We will also intend to produce new interviews and presentations monthly, many already in development. Everything we do together will be accessible online for free. The knowledge gained will hopefully filter down to residents so we can build stronger and healthier communities for many years to come.”

The *Mental Health Task Force: Communities That Care* was formed by the Town of Portugal Cove-St. Philip’s after the council presented the concept of a task force to address the mental health crisis to cities and towns at a gathering in 2018. The purpose of the task force is to create and maintain a municipality-driven initiative with the primary goal of making mental health everyone’s business and ending stigma in the sector. The task force is a forum for discussion and a place to coordinate joint action. It assists municipalities in accessing various professionals in the field to support residents and offers access to a multitude of online and resources.

More information about the task force and access to the resources related to this new partnership announced today can be found at <https://municipalnl.ca/membership/mental-health-task-force-webinars/>.

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